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DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION  
LANSING



THOMAS D. WATKINS, JR.  
SUPERINTENDENT OF  
PUBLIC INSTRUCTION

September 22, 2003

**MEMORANDUM**

**To:** State Board of Education

**From:** Thomas D. Watkins, Jr., Chairman

**Subject:** Update on High Priority Schools

During the August 2003 State Board of Education meeting, it was recommended that an update on high priority schools become a monthly report to the Board. Attached you will find a newsletter, "High Priority Points" that has been developed with two goals in mind, to provide status information to the State Board of Education, and to communicate to the staff working with high priority schools on the activities and initiatives that are taking place around the state.

Included in this newsletter are brief updates on the Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) Accountability Report, the most current list of Children's Action Network (CAN) High Priority Schools, and reports from our High Priority Teams located in the eight Intermediate School District regions.

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# HIGH PRIORITY POINTS



Thomas D. Watkins, Jr., Superintendent of Public Instruction

Dr. Jeremy Hughes, Deputy Superintendent/Chief Academic Officer

## High Priority Teams Are Formed

On July 28th, the High Priority Schools Initiative met with Partner Educators, School Improvement Facilitators from 17 Intermediate School Districts, and Office of Field Services Consultants from the Michigan Department of Education during an orientation session at Washtenaw Intermediate School District. The purpose of the session was to provide information to the 60+ who attended on the MDE's Strategic Plan for Assistance to High Priority Schools as well as begin the work of forming High Priority Teams located in the eight regional service delivery

areas: Genesee, Kent, KRESA, Muskegon, Oakland, Saginaw, Washtenaw, and Wayne.

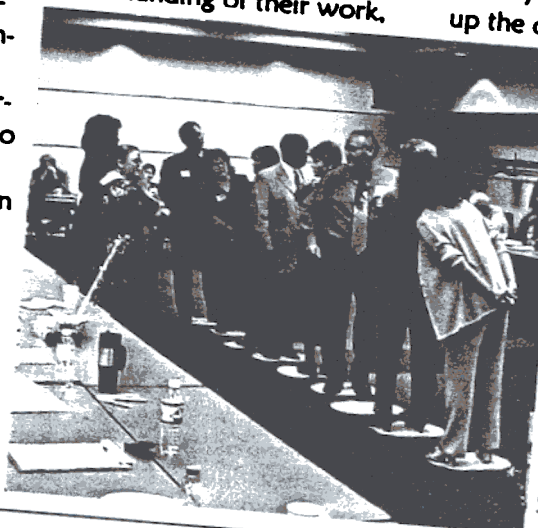
Woven throughout the day were opportunities for teams to get to know each other, establish shared understanding of their work,

and iron out logistical considerations.

CEPI provided teams with Data Notebooks on each of the High Priority Schools within the ISD constituencies and Dr. Jeremy Hughes wrapped up the day with a status

report on NCLB, MEAP, and AYP.

High Priority Teams will be meeting throughout the school year to provide information on their progress in Michigan's High Priority Schools.



September, 2003

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## AYP Accountability Reports

Local school districts, public school academies, and intermediate school districts were asked to provide information on how they would address the needs of their high priority schools.

They were asked to respond to a series of questions soliciting their plans for address-

ing: High Quality Staff, Instruction and Curriculum, Decision-Making, Professional Development, Resource Allocation, and Communications. They were also asked to list 3 of the most important barriers to being successful.

The following represents the

### number of responses:

- Public School Districts - 21 of 52 districts identified with high priority schools
- Intermediate School Districts - 12 of 16
- Public School Academies 7 of 18 high priority PSA's
- Public School Academy Authorizers. 3

### Special points of interest:

- High Priority Teams begin their work
- AYP Accountability Reports continue to arrive
- 8 High Priority Teams report on their activities to date
- Up-date on "MI-MAP"
- List of CAN schools



# High Priority Teams Activities to Date

## Kent Intermediate

- Betty Underwood,  
Gale Sharpe, Karen

Ruple, and Bill Kirby

- Attended Grand Rapids Public Schools Principal's Academy for two days in August.
- Met with principals for a 30-45 minute initial interview and created a matrix with information from each school.
- Met with Grand Rapids Public Central Office staff to plan strategies for High Priority Schools - focus on data collection - train leadership teams, district Literacy/Math Specialists and others to develop a user friendly form and data base for each school.
- High Priority Team has met to strategically plan the following: coordinating professional development resources, develop a network of High Priority Schools, create a newsletter highlighting events in schools. (Ongoing)
- Developing a seminar for leadership teams to use data: October 8th, 4:30-6:30.
- Will be attending retreat with Grand Rapids Public and Kent staff on October 18th.

**Muskegon Intermediate** - Jeff Holbrook, Shari Graham, Dan Reardon

- Met with ISD "players" (Sup. Asst. Sup., School Imp. Facilitator, Consultants, data team, public relations Facilitator). (Ongoing)
- Met with Muskegon/Muskegon Heights Assistant Superintendents.
- Interviews with principals.
- Met with school staff at a staff meeting.
- Met with school improvement team
- Attended leadership team meeting in Lansing with CSR school.

- Performed school walk-throughs.
- Drove through school communities to get a sense of the neighborhoods.

**Wayne RESA** - Valerie Belay, Ron Collins, Rosanna Formaro, Vi Littles, Delores Dawson, Charlotte O'Brien, Mike McGraw, Mazin Heiderson, and Phyllis Robinson

- Weekly meetings with High Priority Team, Detroit Public Schools, (DPS) and Wayne RESA staff to determine cohort of schools and focus for Detroit schools - working within the DPS plan.
- Partner Educator attended the DPS sponsored Lorraine Monroe training in Ohio in August.
- High Priority Team members have been invited by DPS and Wayne RESA to attend the Lorraine Monroe training in November.
- DPS and Wayne RESA will provide training to the Partner Educators on Accelerated Math and Open Court.
- Partner Educators will assist with Office of Field Services with a Needs Assessment project currently being piloted.

**Saginaw ISD** - Darryl Robbins, Mary Bradley, and Ted Gardella

- Informational Meeting - Buena Vista School District Superintendent, Cabinet and Principals.
- Site visit and introductory meeting with principals - Saginaw and Buena Vista Schools.
- Meeting with High Priority Schools Overview Q & A, team building - Saginaw City Schools, High Priority Principals, Central Office Personnel.
- Orientation Session - Saginaw City Schools, Staff of HP schools. Presentation from Sue Carnell, Governor's Office.

- Team building group sharing. Explanation of Partner Educator role - Staff of HP Schools
- Met with Superintendent of Saginaw ISD for update and ISD's assistance to HP schools.
- Meeting to determine Principals' Academy dates with Saginaw City Schools. "Principals as Instructional Leaders" (P.A.I.L.S.).  
  
Orientation Session - Saginaw City Schools, Principals and Central Office. Initiated P.A.I.L.S. Series.
- Continued site visits in Saginaw City Schools and Buena Vista Schools.

**Washtenaw** - Henry Cade, Bob Butler, Lynne Anne Snellman, Jane Jacobs, Deb Clancy, Stan Masters, Tamara Bashore-Berg, Donna Schmitt-Oliver

- Regional conversation about support for high priority schools.
- Email survey to gain information on professional development activities at high priority schools since AYP Principal Academy in May.
- Met with representatives of HP districts/schools: Overview of Support, Plan for Assistance, Role of HP Team, Identification of Needs.
- Training/workshops set up at WISD for entire region and all HP schools in Washtenaw, Lenawee, Monroe, and Ingham.
- October 1 - Assessment Effective practice - Math and Literacy.
- October 7 - School Climate.

**Macomb, Oakland, and St.**

**Clair ISD's** - Linda Smith, Marie Vitale, Gayle Green, Larry Thomas, Ilene MacDonald

## Macomb

- Meeting with Gayle Green to initiate the process of planning the Academy.
- Interview with the Principal, Mt. Clemens Middle School.

## Activities, continued...

- Interview Superintendent of Mt. Clemens Public Schools.
- Meeting with 11 consultants at Macomb ISD, Marie Vitale and Terry Spencer, the new curriculum director in Mt. Clemens to plan the two day Academy – September 8 and 15.
- Professional development for the math curriculum is scheduled with the math teachers at Mt. Clemens Middle School for September 23<sup>rd</sup> and September 24<sup>th</sup>.
- Meet with the consultants, Gayle Green, Marie Vitale and Terry Spencer to begin to develop plans for the professional development for the rest of the year.

### Oakland

- Met with the Assistant Superintendents at Oakland Schools to discuss the Academy.
- Met with team and individual consultants at Oakland Schools to better understand availability of expertise.
- Met with the Superintendent, Assis-

tant Supt. of Oak Park Schools, and the Principal and reading specialist of the HP school.

- Met the team at Oakland Schools where a plan of assistance is unveiled involving leadership training for principals and consultants working in "high priority" schools.
- Met with central office staff from Pontiac Public Schools.
- Interviewed Principals from HP schools.

### Future plans in Pontiac include:

Work on the final plan for long term professional development for principals in Pontiac.

Notify teachers and principals of professional development available at Oakland Schools.

Determine the needs in each building and to customize the professional development.

Finalize the plan and present it to the principals at an Academy.

### St. Clair ISD

- Met with the Superintendent and the Curriculum Director and interviewed Principal of HP school.
- Met with consultants at St. Clair ISD.
- Met with Superintendent, Curriculum Director, Partnership coordinator, Principal, and ISD consultant.
- Behavior plan unveiled to parents at HP school on Sept. 9.
- Teachers involved in Reading First and literacy development from ISD consultant.
- Training for the Trailblazer's Math Program with ISD consultant.

### Future Plans for Port Huron include:

Assist principal with school-wide data collection and analysis.

Professional development in positive discipline with Alice Terry.

### **Genesee ISD** - Jill Ashworth, Pat Meaux, Bob Balwinski, Sybil Lenzi, Mary Lavengood

- Introduced to Superintendents and central office staff as well as principals of the HP school districts and schools within the Genesee ISD area.
- Initial visit/interview with the 22 principals of HP schools.
- Surveyed principals regarding professional development needs.
- Supported current professional development in the area of literacy, mathematics, and behavioral expectations.
- Convened an informational session on Sept. 16 with central office staff, principals, and school improvement team representatives at Genesee ISD.
- Support of professional development in the "Governor's Challenge" school.
- Continue work on the four strands of the Strategic Plan for Assisting High Priority Schools.



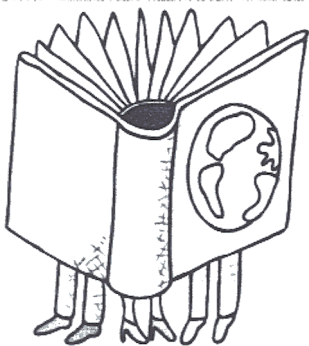
*Staff from Genesee county's High Priority schools attend informational session on September 16. with Dr. Svitkovitch and HP Team as hosts.*

### **KRESA** - Jan Oord, Sarah Bates, John McGonigle, Mary Gehrig, Becky Meier

- Established a network of working parameters within 4 ISD areas.
- High Priority Teams have been established in each of the ISD areas: Berrien, Calhoun, Kalamazoo, and Van Buren.
- The HP Team reviews HP school data, school improvement plans, and works with staff to determine needs.
- Partner Educator serves on ChildNet group in Benton Harbor.
- Invited by Reading First Coordinator to attend conference.
- Received MI-Plan training as a member of Core Group 1.







# Mapping School Reform

Solving the student achievement puzzle is an "inside job" – each school in

question finds its own combination of solutions through a process of self-diagnosis and self-directed inquiry. As Partner Educators worked intensely with Michigan's fourteen pilot sites over the last two years, consistent patterns emerged from those efforts. While each situation is different, school staffs struggling to understand disappointing performance reach consistently for some of the same analytical tools, reflective processes and system-building techniques. And – because the staff that's engineering the changes has its hands full running a school in full swing – sometimes the needed tools don't get developed for lack of time or capacity.

Partner Educators worked together during the summer to identify those

missing tools. They were charged with the rigorously practical test of asking, "If this had been available in my building, would the busy people there have grabbed it gratefully and put it to work immediately?" We clustered the top 50 products into categories such as "Powerful Leadership," "Using Data Decisively," "Agreeing on Expectations," and "Improving Instruction." Partners have begun the exciting process of compiling, developing, and organizing these essential tools for school reform – a map guiding schools towards increased student achievement.

It is expected that the first 10-12 products will be developed by December, 2003. They will be packaged, both in hard copy and on disk, in ways that invite use and fit into a school's MI-Plan work, Ed-YES or NCLB planning or its own self-diagnostic process. These newly developed tools will be offered to this year's high priority schools for field-testing at the mid-year seminars. Their feedback will improve

their usefulness as other products are developed.

## Units Currently Under Construction

- Powerful Leadership
- Administrative Systems that "Hum"
- Spirit/Climate You Can Build From
- Agreeing on Expectations
- Using Data Decisively
- Improving Instruction
- Getting the Power from your Aligned Curriculum
- Practical Professional Development
- Focusing the School Improvement Plan
- Decision-Making Meetings that Work
- Putting Technology To Work

## High Priority Schools - Children's Action Network Resource Center

High Priority Schools that are part of the Family Independence Agency's Children's Action Network Resource Centers

| County   | City          | School                   | County | City          | School              |
|----------|---------------|--------------------------|--------|---------------|---------------------|
| Berrien  | Benton Harbor | Sorter Elementary        | Wayne  | Detroit       | Sherrard Elem.      |
| Calhoun  | Battle Creek  | Ann J. Kellogg           | Wayne  | Detroit       | Bellevue Elementary |
| Genesee  | Flint         | Washington Elem.         | Wayne  | Detroit       | Von Steuben Elem.   |
| Genesee  | Flint         | Durant Turri Mott        | Wayne  | Detroit       | Ford Elementary     |
| Genesee  | Flint         | Bryant Elementary        | Wayne  | Detroit       | McFarlane Elem.     |
| Ingham   | Lansing       | Grand River Magnet       | Wayne  | Detroit       | Stewart Elem.       |
| Kent     | Grand Rapids  | Harrison Park Elementary | Wayne  | Hamtramck     | Dickinson West      |
| Lenawee  | Adrian        | McKinley Elementary      | Wayne  | Highland Park | Cortland Academy    |
| Macomb   | Mt. Clemens   | Mt. Clemens              | Wayne  | Taylor        | Myers Elementary    |
| Muskegon | Muskegon City | Steele Junior            |        |               |                     |
| Saginaw  | Saginaw       | Heaverich Elementary     |        |               |                     |